

were found skulking in the base of bushes. It is possibly significant that the only one collected from a typical flycatcher perch was the only specimen that was not in moult. The migrant Red-backed Shrike is found through most of southern Africa but literature suggests that it is particularly common in northern and central Bechuanaland (Roberts 1935; 154, Hall 1956: 108) in areas from which the resident Fiscal Shrike (*Lanius collaris*) is curiously absent.

European Bee-eaters (*Merops apiaster*) were only seen once, being the only birds encountered on an open stretch of grassland in thorn country north of Shorobe. All three specimens collected were in moult.

It is not possible from such a brief stay in a limited area to be dogmatic about the behaviour of migrants in their winter quarters but it is apparent that their ecological relationship with resident species is highly variable in the different families. It is also worth noting the preference that most bush and woodland species seem to show for the dry thorn country, rather than riverine forest, or mopane woodland (which is singularly barren of resident species as well); it is possible that the protection from predators afforded by thorn country may have some bearing on this.

Finally, it is evident that considerable research is needed into the incidence of winter moult among migrant species, as indeed workers like Williamson have already appreciated. This factor is particularly important to systematic workers trying to determine the subspecies of migrants. Since for this purpose it is essential to compare specimens that are in like plumage it is difficult to see how satisfactory identification can be made between subspecies that vary only in degree of colour, for birds on their breeding grounds (May to August) which provide the yard-stick for subspecific identification, are not truly comparable with winter birds, nor is there any certainty that the new plumage acquired in winter will be identical with that acquired by the same bird in a summer moult.

To further research in this field the British Trust for Ornithology has instigated a moult enquiry, keeping card records for Palaearctic species. Anyone interested who has opportunity to handle or collect specimens is urged to contact the Trust (2 King Edward St., Oxford) so that they may co-operate in tackling this problem.

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“*Passer rufipectus*” Bonaparte in Crete

by GEORGE E. WATSON

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The type of *Passer rufipectus* Bonaparte (1850, *Consp. Av.* 1: 509), collected in Egypt, has been considered a hybrid between a local House Sparrow (*P. domesticus niloticus*) and a migrant Spanish Sparrow (*P. hispaniolensis*) with an aberrant chestnut throat patch (Meise 1934, *Orn. Monatsber.* 42: 12). The characters of the presumed parental populations are shown in Table 1. Another presumed hybrid from north-east

Africa which had pronounced rufous and chestnut pigments was named *P. italiae senckenbergianus* by Hartert (1904, *Vög. pal. Fauna*: 152) and a similar bird from Egypt (Dresden Museum, 1499) was described by Meise (1934: 13).

A breeding male sparrow (Yale Peabody Museum 60943) which corresponds to the description of *P. rufipectus* was collected in an olive grove-wheat field near Tylissos, Crete, May 3, 1959. The specimen is of the *italiae* type except that the usually black markings at the side of the black throat are mixed with chestnut and some of the lower back and rump feathers are washed with rufous. It has the pair of creamy white back stripes and jagged posterior margin to the throat patch found in *P. hispaniolensis* and thus scores 57.5 in Meise's (1936, *Journ. f. Orn.* 84: 633) hybrid index in which "pure" *domesticus* is 0, *italiae* about 50, and "pure" *hispaniolensis* 100. The latter two characters are present in most, but not all, of the Cretan population which is probably the stabilized autochthonous result of hybridization (index 40-60) between *P. domesticus* and *P. hispaniolensis* (Meise, 1936: 664). This population is taxonomically indistinguishable from the Italian population, best called *P. domesticus italiae*. Therefore, *P. i. schiebelsi* Rokitsansky (1934, *Falco* 30: 8), type locality Khanea, Crete, is a synonym of *P. d. italiae*.

In the *P. domesticus-hispaniolensis* superspecies, aberrant individuals with extensive chestnut or rufous coloration are not rare. Spanish Sparrows with chestnut throat feathers have been found in north-east Africa (Hartert, 1904, *Nov. Zool.* 11: 458). House Sparrows with chestnut markings on the throat are frequent in Switzerland (Daut 1921, *Orn. Beob.* 18: 53) and have been collected in northern Europe, the British Isles (Sharpe, 1888, *Cat. Birds Br. Mus.* 12: 310), and the United States (Calhoun, 1947, *Auk* 64: 305). A similar male (YPM 59427) was collected by me in Mugla, south-western Turkey, 14th April, 1960. Part of the throat patch of this specimen is chestnut, the lower back is washed with rufous, and some of the upper tail-coverts are totally rufous. Its hybrid index is 2.5 (jagged throat margin).

The wing of the type of *P. rufipectus* is 79 mm. (Meise, 1934: 12), a little longer than the mean of the Cretan population, which, according to Rokitsansky (1934, *Falco* 30: 8), measures 76-82 (78 mm.) in 50 males. Because *P. d. niloticus* is smaller, measuring 72-77 (75 mm.) in 20 males (Vaurie, 1959, *Birds Pal. Fauna*: 570), it seems likely that *P. rufipectus* represents an aberration of the Cretan population which occasionally wanders to Egypt in the winter (Meinertzhagen, 1930, *Nicoll's Birds of Egypt*: 120) rather than the product of a mixed pairing between an Egyptian House Sparrow and a wintering Spanish Sparrow which failed to return north. *P. i. senckenbergianus* and the other Egyptian hybrid, since they are smaller, 74.5 and 73.5 (Meise, 1934: 12), probably are crosses of *P. d. niloticus* and *P. hispaniolensis*.

TAXONOMIC CONCLUSIONS:

Passer rufipectus Bonaparte from Egypt, thought by Meise to be a hybrid of *P. domesticus niloticus* x *P. hispaniolensis*, is here considered to be an aberrant vagrant of the Cretan sparrow population *P. d. italiae*. On the basis of their smaller size *P. italiae senckenbergianus* Hartert and a similar sparrow with pronounced rufous colouring from Egypt in the

Dresden Museum may be the result of local hybridization between the small Egyptian *P. d. niloticus* and *P. hispaniolensis*.

TABLE 1
Characters of the populations of the
Passer domesticus - *hispaniolensis* superspecies

Population	Description	Hybrid index (Meise 1936: 664)
<i>P. d. domesticus</i> Europe & western Turkey	Grey crown, grey cheeks, restricted black throat, plain flanks, brown back, large	0
<i>P. d. niloticus</i> Egypt	Grey crown, grey cheeks, restricted black throat, plain flanks, brown back, small	0
<i>P. d. italiae</i> Italy, Crete	Brown crown, usually white cheeks, extensive black throat, plain flanks, usually brown back, large	40-60
<i>P. hispaniolensis</i> Southern Europe, south-west Asia, North Africa	Brown crown, white cheeks, extensive black throat, black streaked flanks, black and cream back, large	100

TABLE 2
Summary of taxonomic conclusions

Specimen	Description	Meise 1934	Watson
Type of " <i>P. rufipectus</i> " from Egypt	Large hybrid with reddish neck	=aberrant <i>P. domesticus</i> <i>niloticus</i> x <i>P. hispanio-</i> <i>lensis</i>	=aberrant Cretan <i>P. d. italiae</i>
" <i>P. i. sencken-</i> <i>bergianus</i> " from north-east Africa	Small hybrid with reddish neck	=aberrant <i>P. domesticus</i> <i>niloticus</i> x <i>P. hispanio-</i> <i>lensis</i>	=aberrant <i>P. do-</i> <i>mesticus niloticus</i> x <i>P. hispanio-</i> <i>lensis</i>
Dresden Mus. 1499 from Egypt	Small hybrid with reddish neck	=aberrant <i>P. domesticus</i> <i>niloticus</i> x <i>P. hispanio-</i> <i>lensis</i>	=aberrant <i>P. do-</i> <i>mesticus niloticus</i> x <i>P. hispanio-</i> <i>lensis</i>
Y.P.M. 60943 from Crete	Like " <i>rufipectus</i> " Hybrid index 57.5	—	=aberrant Cretan <i>P. d. italiae</i>
Y.P.M. 59427 from Turkey	<i>P. domesticus</i> with reddish neck Hybrid index 2.5	—	=aberrant <i>P. d.</i> <i>domesticus</i>

The validity of the genus *Lusciniola* Gray

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Seeböhm (1881) included eleven species in the genus *Lusciniola*. Subsequently, however, many of these were found to have affinities with other genera, and in more recent works the genus has been regarded as monotypic, containing only the type species, *Lusciniola melanopogon*, the Moustached Warbler.

This species does not appear to show any marked differences from